

Ministry of Community and
Social Services



Youth and Recreation Branch


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puppetry



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Puppets are Fun

The purpose of this booklet is to give children's play leaders some background information about making puppets ... an ideal playground project and a rewarding area of creative play for any children's program.

All puppets suggested here are suitable for children 7-12 years old. As a play leader, your job is to help the children design their own puppets, costumes, props and stages, devise and prepare their own plays and put them on for their own enjoyment and that of other children.

They will get more fun from their puppets if they do everything for themselves. A simple play is included as a guide. For more suggestions on children's dramatics and ideas for plays, see the Quiet Periods manual in this series. The puppets shown here are made with inexpensive and readily available materials. Costumes, props, plays, stages can be improvised from scraps and remnants.

WHAT'S NEEDED

construction paper
toilet paper (several rolls)
crepe paper (several colors)
plasticine
glue
flour
water
poster paint

TOOLS

scissors
knife
sucker sticks
paint brushes

RECIPE FOR PAPIER MACHE

Papier mâché (a French expression mean-

ing "chewed paper") is an excellent material to use for puppet heads. It's easy to prepare and shape and weighs almost nothing. When dry it can be cut, sanded, painted.

Into a plastic dishpan or other large container, tear toilet paper into postage stamp size pieces. Tear up a big panful. It takes much more than you think. Sprinkle the torn paper with flour. Mix well. Add cold water a little at a time. Have the children use both hands to knead the mix into a soft dough. If the mass turns sticky, add more torn paper and flour. Work the mass thoroughly to get rid of lumps.

If the mâché is to be left for any length of time before it is used, wrap it in damp newspaper or damp cloth. If a crust begins to form, the mâché can be revived by soaking in water. However, this won't work if the hardening has gone beyond the surface.

HOW TO MAKE HEADS FOR HAND PUPPETS

With plasticine, make a ball about two inches in diameter. Next, make a roll as thick as the first finger and half as long. Join this stem to the ball as in figure 1. Now take some of the papier mâché and smooth over the ball and stem. Build up this cover until it is about 1/8 of an inch thick. See figure 2.

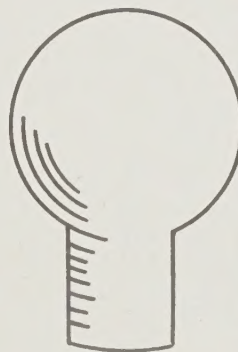


figure 1

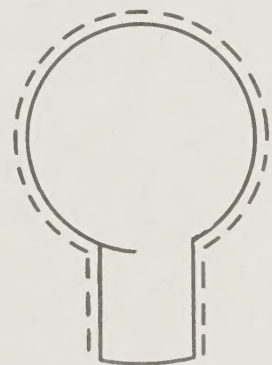


figure 2

MODELLING

For eyes, roll two small balls of mâché.

For the nose, roll a larger ball. For eye-brows make two thin strips. For lips, roll two shorter rolls. For moustache, form an oblong. For chin, roll a small ball and flatten it on one surface.

Dab flour-and-water paste on the head where the features will be stuck. Press on eye-brows, eyes, nose, lips or moustache and chin. See figure 3. Fill in the spaces with



figure 3a



figure 3b

more mâché and smooth the joins with the fingers. Encourage the children who want to create a special character to do some modelling with toothpicks or wooden match-sticks. Figure 4. When they are happy with the features, have heads put in a warm, sunny place to dry. Don't bake because baking might dry the mâché too fast.



figure 4

HOLLOWING OUT

When head is dry, cut in half with a sharp knife as in figure 5. Pick out the plasticine core — figure 6.



figure 5



figure 6

Before the two halves are glued together, have each child make sure his first finger will fit inside the hole at the neck. Then glue the two pieces together and let dry. Make ears from two small rolls of mâché. Curve and press on head.

HANDS

Hands should be made while the head is drying. Form two more balls of mâché at least twice the size of the one made for the nose. Roll balls out slightly and flatten a little. Form them into hand shapes (only the thumb separate) one right and one left, as in figure 7. When the hands are dry, fix them into the ends of two cardboard tubes made to fit the child's thumb and second finger. Use a little more mâché and flour-and-water paste to hold them. See figure 8.



figure 7



figure 8

PAINTING

When head and hands are completely dry, they can be colored with poster paint. White mixed with a little red and yellow gives a fresh color. After the eyes are painted, a speck of white added to the pupils makes the eyes look alive. Eyes and lips can be glazed with white shellac or clear nail polish. Paint arms and hands flesh color and indicate fingers with fine dark lines — figure 8.

HAIR

Hair can be made of mâché or wool can be used for both hair and moustache. Head should be painted and dry before wool is glued on.



DRESSING

Before the costume is cut out of crêpe paper or cloth, have child put the head on his finger as in figure 9. Measure the length and width so the costume will be big enough. Tight costumes restrict hand movements. Instead of a costume, an even simpler way is to drape the hand with a handkerchief or scrap of cloth. If the puppet is to wear glasses, they can be made with a bit of fine wire. Other accessories, hats, jewels etc. can be made with a little imagination and bits of paper or cloth, beads and odds and ends.



figure 9

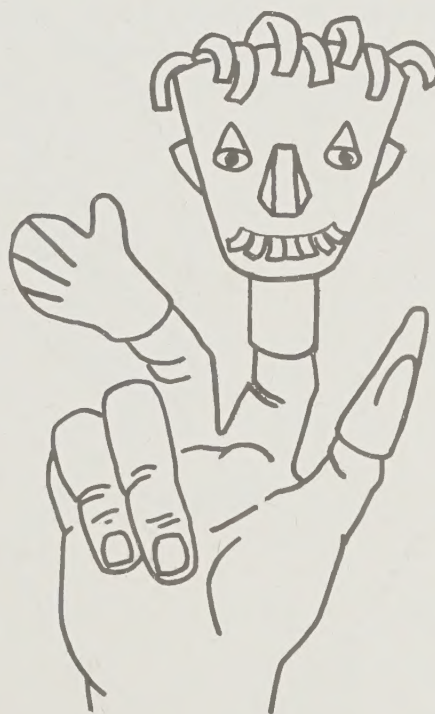


figure 10

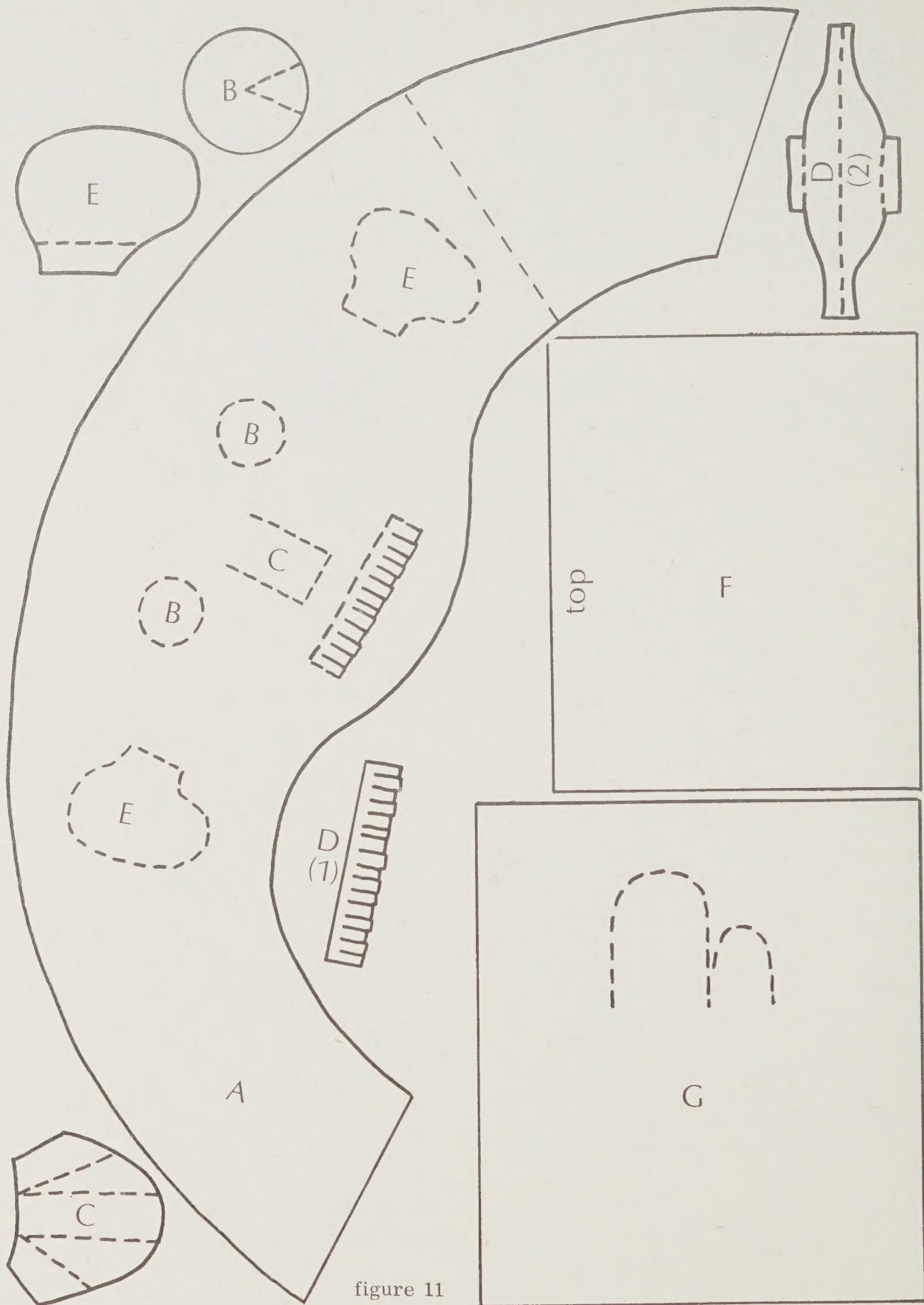


figure 11

Paper Hand Puppets

On page 4 is a basic pattern for a paper puppet head which the children can use to design their own characters. Changing the shape of the face, eyes, ears and mouth will give different types. An indian might have a feather headdress of colored paper, for example.

Trace the pieces on page 4 on light cardboard to use for the master pattern. Then the children can use the master pattern to trace each part on white or colored paper. Make two eyes (B), two ears (E) and two hands (G). Cut out each piece.



figure 12

ASSEMBLING HEAD

Bend head (A) and glue ends together to the dotted line. On each of two eyes (B) make one cut on the pie-shaped dotted line. Overlap and glue to the other dotted line to form a cone shape. Glue each cone to face as in figure 12. Fold nose (C) along dotted lines. Bend shaded portions under and glue to face. Figure 12

If face is to have a moustache (D) cut along lines and glue in place. Push up and crumble the small strips to form a bushy moustache.

If face is to have mouth instead of moustache, fold D2 along dotted centre line and bend slightly to give impression of lips. Fold under centre and end tabs and glue to face.

Roll neck (F) around first finger to get size. Glue to make a roll. When dry, fasten neck roll to inside of the back of the head so that the neck extends well below the head. When glue is dry, bend ears (E) at dotted line and glue to face with ear flaps to the back of the head.

Fine strips of paper may be glued inside the edge of head, then brought forward and crumbled or curled to make hair. Additional features may be painted on. Paint pupils of eyes on lower half of each eye cone.

HANDS

Roll rectangle (G) around second finger and glue the overlap. Roll the second hand rectangle (G) around thumb and glue the overlap. Flatten the ends of the rolls where the thumb and hand are outlined. Glue together. When dry, cut out hands as shown in figure 13.

If you use glue that dries quickly, a paper hand puppet can be finished inside an hour. It can be dressed simply by wrapping a handkerchief or a piece of cloth around the hand.



figure 13

Finger Puppets

Interesting puppets can be made using the first and second fingers as the puppet legs. By moving the fingers the puppet can walk, run or dance freely and convincingly. Since the length of the puppet's legs is decided by the length of the operator's fingers, the average height of the puppets on an adult hand will be about six inches. It will be shorter on a child's hand.

MAKING THE BODY

Make two short tubes of construction paper to fit in the ring positions of the first and second fingers.

Cut a body shape from hips to shoulders from construction paper as shown in figure 14

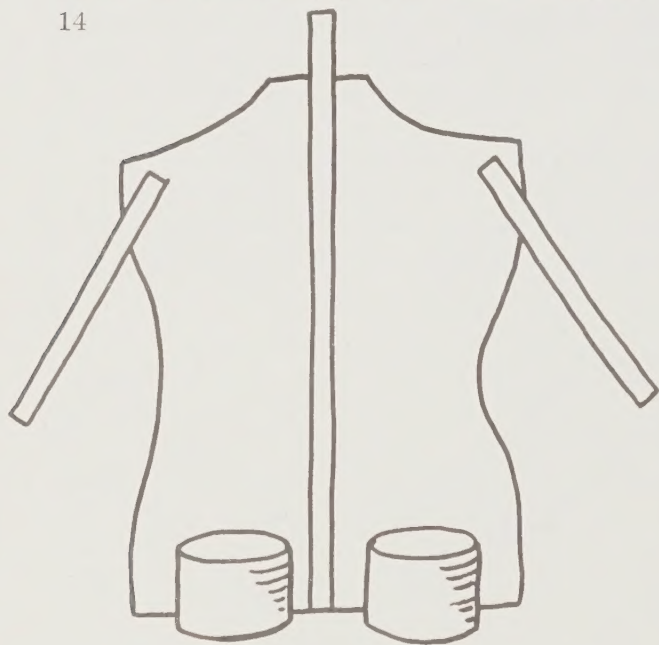


figure 14

Fasten the two finger tubes to the lower part of the body, as shown.

A sucker stick or similar piece of wood is glued at the back of the body with half an inch protruding at the neck. This acts as a stiffener for the body and provides a neck to fasten the head to.

Arms can be made by fastening two sucker sticks cut to suitable lengths at the shoulders, as shown. Or you can have flexible arms by attaching two pieces of string instead of the sticks to the shoulders.

MAKING THE HANDS

Use papier mâché and model the hands at the ends of the sticks. If you used string for arms, make a knot at the hand end for a grip for the mâché.

MAKING THE HEAD

The easiest way to make a head is to roll some mâché into a ball about 1½ inches in diameter, then paint the features on it when it is dry.

If the children wish, heads may be modelled in papier mâché like the hand puppet described on page 1. Or you could make just the nose and ears with mâché and paint on the other features.

While the mâché of the head is still soft, place it over the wooden sucker stick neck that projects at the shoulders and move it around until it fits easily and will bob a little when the puppet walks. Do not glue the head to the neck.

When the head and hands are dry, color with poster paint. Do not varnish because the shiny surface picks up light and audience will not be able to see the faces for glare.

COSTUME

Cloth or crêpe paper (which is strong and stretchy) can be used. If you choose cloth, use a thin piece so as not to restrict movement.

Trouser legs or a skirt may be glued around the paper rolls either before or after they are glued to the body. Bare fingers look like bare legs. If the puppet is to be costumes in a skirt or shorts, fingertip shoes should be made. Shoes are optional with trousers.

Manipulation of Playground Puppets

PAPIER MACHE AND PAPER HAND PUPPETS

Costumes have been left off figures 9 and 10 on page 3 so that the exact positioning of the hands shows.

Manipulation is easy. Take advantage of the opportunities for rapid movement. Puppets can be made to pick up all sorts of light-weight props and this feature helps keep your audience interested in the performance.

FINGER PUPPETS

Figures 15 and 16 on page 7 show how finger puppets are manipulated. It is easy because only the legs are moved by the operator; head and string arms move automatically. If it is necessary to carry props, a basket for instance, a small wire hook can be inserted at the end of the hand.



figure 16



figure 15

Staging Playground Puppets

HOW TO MAKE STAGES

FINGER PUPPET STAGE

A large cardboard carton makes a good stage. Figure 17 shows how to cut it.

A is the opening through which the audience sees the puppets. It should be about 30 inches long and 8 inches high.

B is the front masking that conceals the operators from the audience.

C is the backdrop. This should be 10 inches high.

D and E are tabs — pieces of stiff cardboard placed about 6 inches from the back. Each one should be about 4 inches wide and the same height as the backdrop. The purpose of the tabs is to conceal the puppets waiting to appear on stage.

Remember when you are choosing the carton that the depth of the acting area will depend on the size of the carton.

The stage can be placed on a low table or a box according to the height of the operators. If you use a table, cover the sides and front with brown paper or other masking material so that the operator's legs won't show.

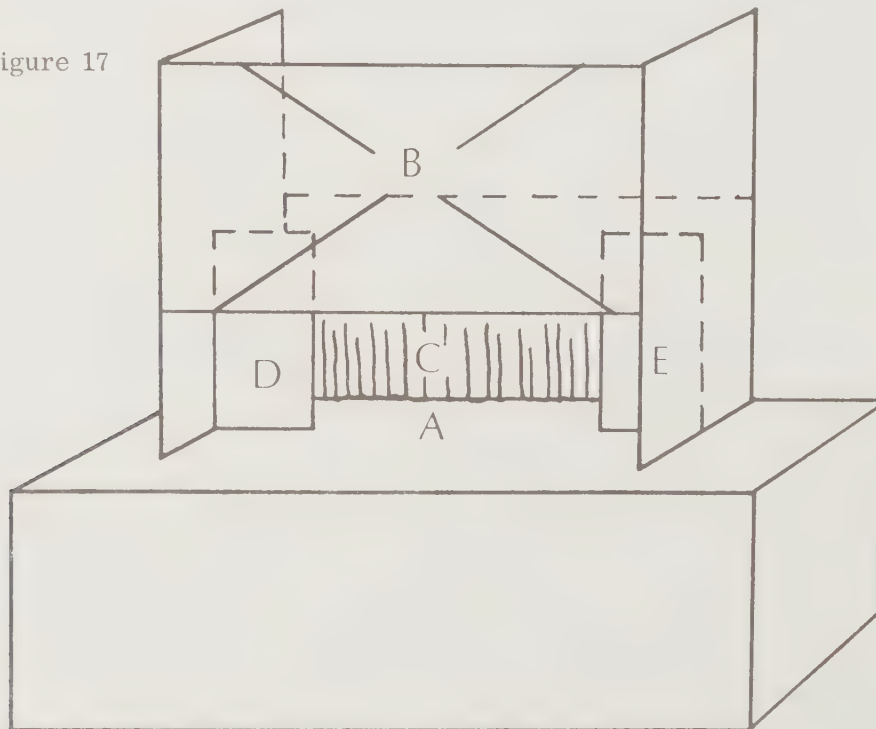
PRESENTATION AND PROPERTIES

Paint the backdrop (C) flat black for most effective presentation. Tabs D and E can be painted black too. If they are painted to be used as scenery they can be made removable so that a different set can be used for each play.

If the operator covers his hand and arm with a black stocking or glove, the puppet and its movements will stand out and the hand will hardly be noticed.

If scenery is to be used, make flat cut-outs of trees and houses, and so on. Fasten them to the backdrop with pins or scotch tape.

figure 17



Props such as chairs, tables and other furniture can be made from thick cardboard. But it is best to use as few as possible in children's presentations.

BOX STAGE FOR PAPIER MACHE AND PAPER HAND PUPPETS

With a few pieces of light lumber, a simple box stage can be constructed as in figure 18.

Use four uprights and eight cross pieces to make a frame the size you wish. Measurements on the diagram are given as a guide to proportions only.

A is the opening through which the puppets are seen. The backcloth at B should hang a few inches below the level of the front opening.

Front of the box (except the opening at A) and the sides should be covered with brown paper or other material.

Operators enter the box by ducking under the backcloth at B. Scenery should be cut-outs fastened to the backcloth.

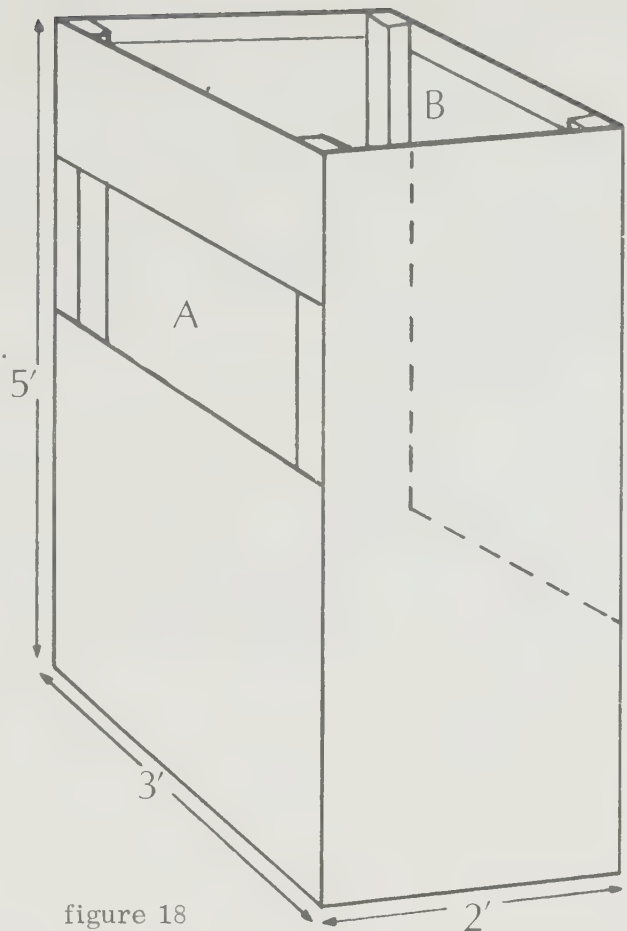


figure 18



figure 19

OPEN STAGE

Another way to stage the puppets indoors or out is shown in figure 19.

A table or anything handy that will form a platform about 4 feet long and $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet high can be draped with paper or other material. The table is then placed parallel with a wall or fence and about 2 feet away from it. Operators sit or crouch behind the table and work the puppets along the back edge.

The wall or fence acts as a background. Flat cut-out scenic effects can be fastened to it. Another way is to mount scenic properties on pointed sticks which are stuck in the ground in front of the fence or wall. Stick scenery makes it possible to change scenes faster. It also gives an effect of depth which is more interesting.

HOW TO MAKE A FLAT CUT-OUT TREE

Cut several shapes from construction paper to represent foliage, as in figure 20.

Cut out the shape of the tree trunk and glue the pieces of foliage to the trunk so they overlap each other as suggested.

To make more solid or permanent scenery use thicker cardboard and build it up with papier mâché. Paint scenic effects with poster paint. Remember this paint is not rainproof, so keep props under cover.



figure 20

Hansel and Gretel

This version of the fairy tale is specially prepared for playground puppets. Children can present it with finger or hand puppets. For a first production they'll probably find hand puppets easier.

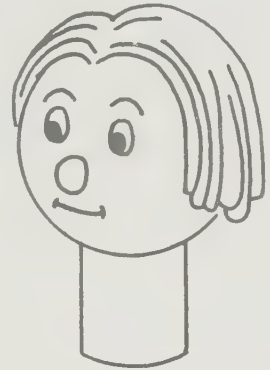
If they decide on hand puppets, a front curtain to close between scenes should be improvised. If this can't be done, it is better to mount the scenic effects on pointed sticks as explained on page 10. These can be stuck in the ground and the audience doesn't see the operator's hand fastening new pieces to the background. Stick scenery makes it possible to change scenery faster and the play can go on almost without a break.



CHARACTERS

Hansel
Gretel
Their Mother

Their Father
Wicked Witch
Wood Fairies



SCENE I

Interior of Hansel and Gretel's home. Only a few objects are needed to give the effect of a woodcutter's cottage. A table and two chairs could be prepared in the flat and mounted in the same way, perhaps, as a window frame or dresser. Father's basket should be made of construction paper.

Mother: Now Hansel, please don't cry any more.

Hansel: I can't help it, Mother — I'm so hungry.

Mother: I know you are, and when I have no food to give you it makes me want to cry too . . . but we must be brave.

Gretel: Cheer up, Hansel. Perhaps Father will sell some of his logs today and bring home something good for us tonight.

Hansel: That's what you said yesterday, Gretel, but we still had to go to bed hungry.

Gretel: Shall we go into the woods, Mother, and look for some berries or some herbs to make soup?

Hansel: Horrid old soup — I hate it!

Mother: You're a good girl, Gretel — that would be better than nothing. Yes, go now and don't stay too long for it will soon be dark. Hansel, stay close to your sister and don't go wandering off on your own.

Gretel: Come on, Hansel.

(They go out)

Mother: Dear me, I wonder what will happen to us all. Poor Father works so hard chopping down trees and taking them to the town. Once he used to sell them every day and then we had enough money to buy whatever we needed, but now nobody seems to want them.

(The Father enters with a basket of food)

Father: Well, here I am with a full basket for you, Mother. Look what I've brought — all the things you need, and still some money in my pocket. Maybe our bad luck has turned.

Mother: At last! At last! How wonderful! The poor children have gone out to look for something to eat — call them in, Father.

Father: Hansel! Gretel! Good news! Good news!

(Silence)

Father: They must have gone a long way, they usually answer my call at once. Hansel! Gretel!

(Silence)

Mother: Let's go and find them, dear — they will be so excited and no wonder, poor things — and then we can all come back and have a fine supper.

(End of Scene I)

SCENE II

Middle of the woods. One or two trees should be enough to create the idea of a forest. The fairies which appear in this scene might be more effective and airy if cut out flat and mounted on thin wire. This can then be pushed up from below and the fairies could be made to hover. A butterfly or bird or two might be handled the same way.

Gretel: Oh dear, we must have taken the wrong path after all.

Hansel: Gretel, I really can't walk another step — please sit down here and have a rest.

Gretel: Poor little Hansel, could you not keep going just a little longer? We can't be far from home now, I'm sure.

Hansel: No, Gretel, I can't go. I'm so tired. You can go on if you like, but I'm going to sleep.

Gretel: Of course I won't leave you. Here . . . lean your head against me and go to sleep.

(Gretel also drops off to sleep. While they sleep some wood fairies come in, look at them and flutter about for a few seconds, then drift off again.)

Hansel: (waking) Gretel, I had a lovely dream, all about fairies.

Gretel: (sleepily) So did I, Hansel. Where are we? Oh, still in the woods. Come on, we must hurry and find the way home.

Hansel: All right, Gretel, I'm coming now, but I wish we could find the right path — I'm still terribly hungry.

Gretel: Don't worry, we'll soon find it now. Let's go.

(End of Scene II)

SCENE III

Outside the Witch's cottage. All that is needed here is a house painted to look as though it were made of cake. Some of the trees used in Scene II can be re-positioned around the Witch's house.

Gretel: Look at that queer house. Funny — we've lived in the forest all our lives and I've never seen that house before.

Hansel: I wonder who lives there, Gretel? Looks to me as though it's made of cake.

Gretel: You silly boy, you can't build a house of cake.

Hansel: Well, I'm so hungry I could eat a stone, anyway — I'm going to try a piece of this fence and see what it is — Gretel, it IS cake!

Gretel: Goodness, Hansel, I hope nobody saw you do that . . . here comes somebody now.

(The Witch enters)

Witch: Good morning, dear children. I'm delighted to see you. Does my fence taste good, young man?

Hansel: P-p-p-please excuse me! I was so hungry and . . . and . . .

Witch: Oh, I don't mind a bit, except that you shouldn't spoil your appetite by eating cake when there are much better things to eat inside my house. In fact, you can have anything you wish for — anything at all. Won't you come in and see? I'm only a poor lonely old woman and I like to have company — specially children's company — for dinner.

Gretel: Thank you very much, but we are lost and if you would just tell us the way back to our cottage

Witch: Presently, presently. First of all we will dine together — eh, little boy?

Hansel: Let's go in, Gretel. We'll get home much faster when we've had something to eat and it's very rude not to accept such a kind invitation.

Gretel: Very well, thank you very much — we will come in with you, but we cannot stay very long.

Witch: Good, good. Come right in children . . . this way. My, you are a fine pair. I declare you look good enough to eat yourselves.

(End of Scene III)

SCENE IV

Inside the Witch's house. Similar interior effects to those used in Scene I can be used. At one side of the room there is a large oven. A box can be painted to look like an oven. It should be made without a bottom so that when placed at the level of the stage, a hand inserted through the bottom can push the oven door open and pull the Witch inside at the right moment. It would be a good idea to introduce a few signs and symbols of witchcraft around the house.

Hansel: Where's the food?

Gretel: Hansel — manners!

Witch: Now, now, have patience, young man. First we have to wait until the oven is hot enough to cook a fine roast.

Gretel: A fine roast of what?

Witch: Why, whatever you fancy, my dear — but it will be a fine tender young joint of something, I promise you. How much do you weigh, little boy?

Hansel: I d-d-don't know. Why do you want to know?

Witch: Oh, just curiosity. You're such a nice, plump little man. Now where's my big knife? I must go and see if it's sharp enough.

(she goes out)

Gretel: Hansel, I'm getting awfully frightened.

Hansel: Yes, I'm a bit nervous, too.

Gretel: Do you know what I think? That old woman is going to roast US — you first, then me. Go out into the garden, Hansel, and hide . . . I'll see if I can trick her somehow and then we can both escape. It's our only chance.

Hansel: Call if you need me and I'll come back.

(Hansel goes out and the Witch returns)

Witch: Where has that boy gone?

Gretel: Oh, just to eat some more cake while the dinner is cooking.

Witch: Has he? That's a good joke, that is. Oh well, he'll be all the better for a little stuffing, I dare say.

Gretel: What do you mean, old woman?

Witch: Nothing for you to worry your pretty head over, my dear. Just open the oven-door for me and see if it's getting hot, will you?

Gretel: I can't open it — it's too stiff.

Witch: Dear me, what a stupid child you are!

(The Witch opens oven-door and puts her head inside. Gretel gives her a push from behind and the Witch goes right in. The door slams and the Witch gives a fearful yell.)

(Hansel comes rushing in with the Father and the Mother.)

Hansel: Look, Gretel! They've found us and now we can all go home together — quick, quick, before she comes back.

(There is another squawk from the oven)

Mother: What's that?

Gretel: It's the old woman. I pushed her in the oven because that's what she was going to do to us.

Father: And you did that to save your brother! I'm proud of my brave little Gretel. That's the best place for the likes of her.

Mother: Let's all go home as fast as we can and forget all about this horrible adventure. There's a whole basket of good things waiting for us there.

Hansel: Do let's hurry.

THE END

The Junior Marionette

This simple string puppet can be a useful addition to the playground puppeteer's repertoire. To make it, the following inexpensive tools will be needed:

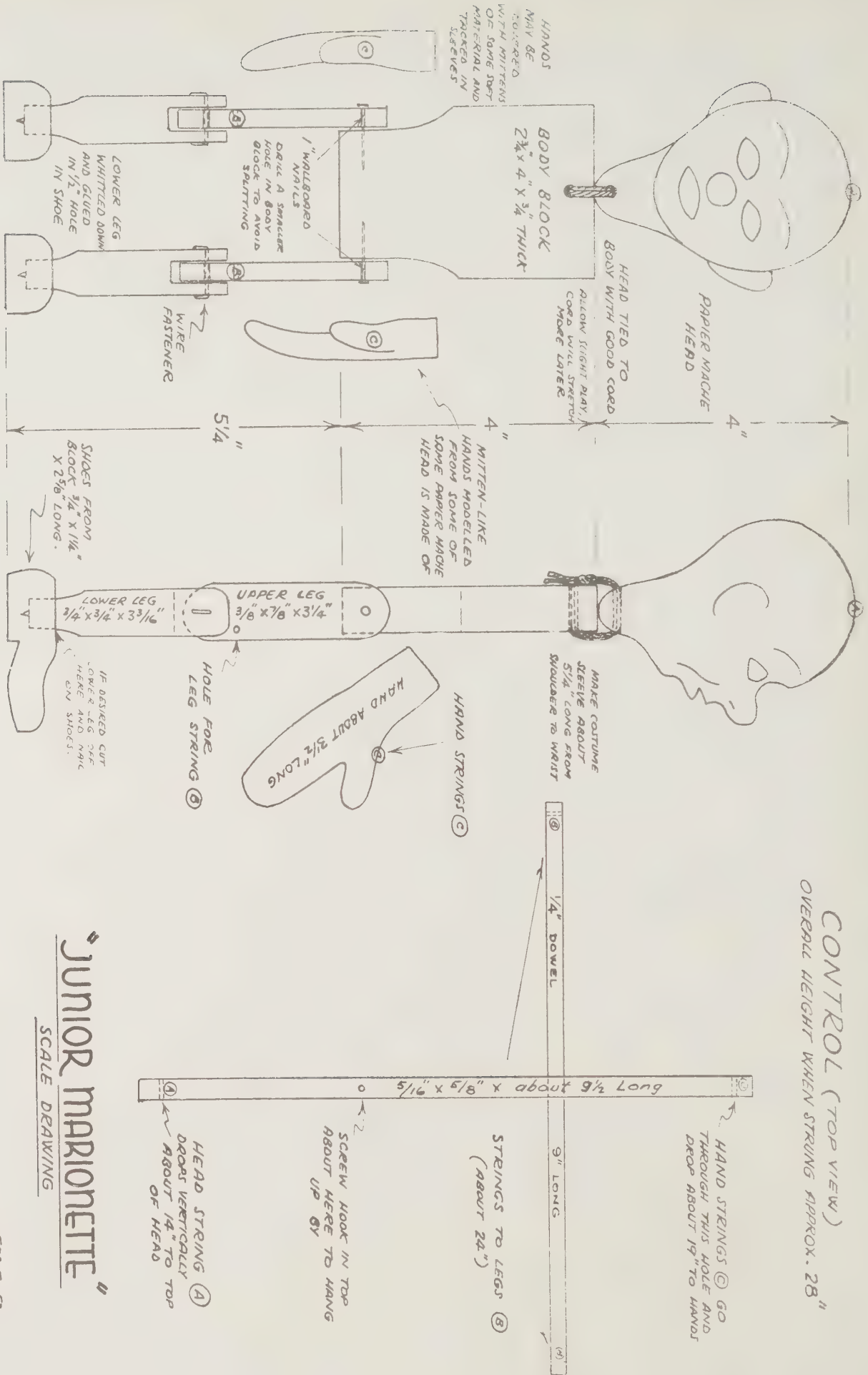
tack hammer
small hand saw (preferably dovetail)
hand drill and 1/8" twist drills
1/4" wood chisel
8" flat metal file
8" half-round wood rasp
pliers
small metal vise (clamp-on bench type)
string
wood
wire
poster paint

Soft wood such as pine is easiest to work. The control can be made from squared wood instead of the dowel shown in the diagram on page 00.

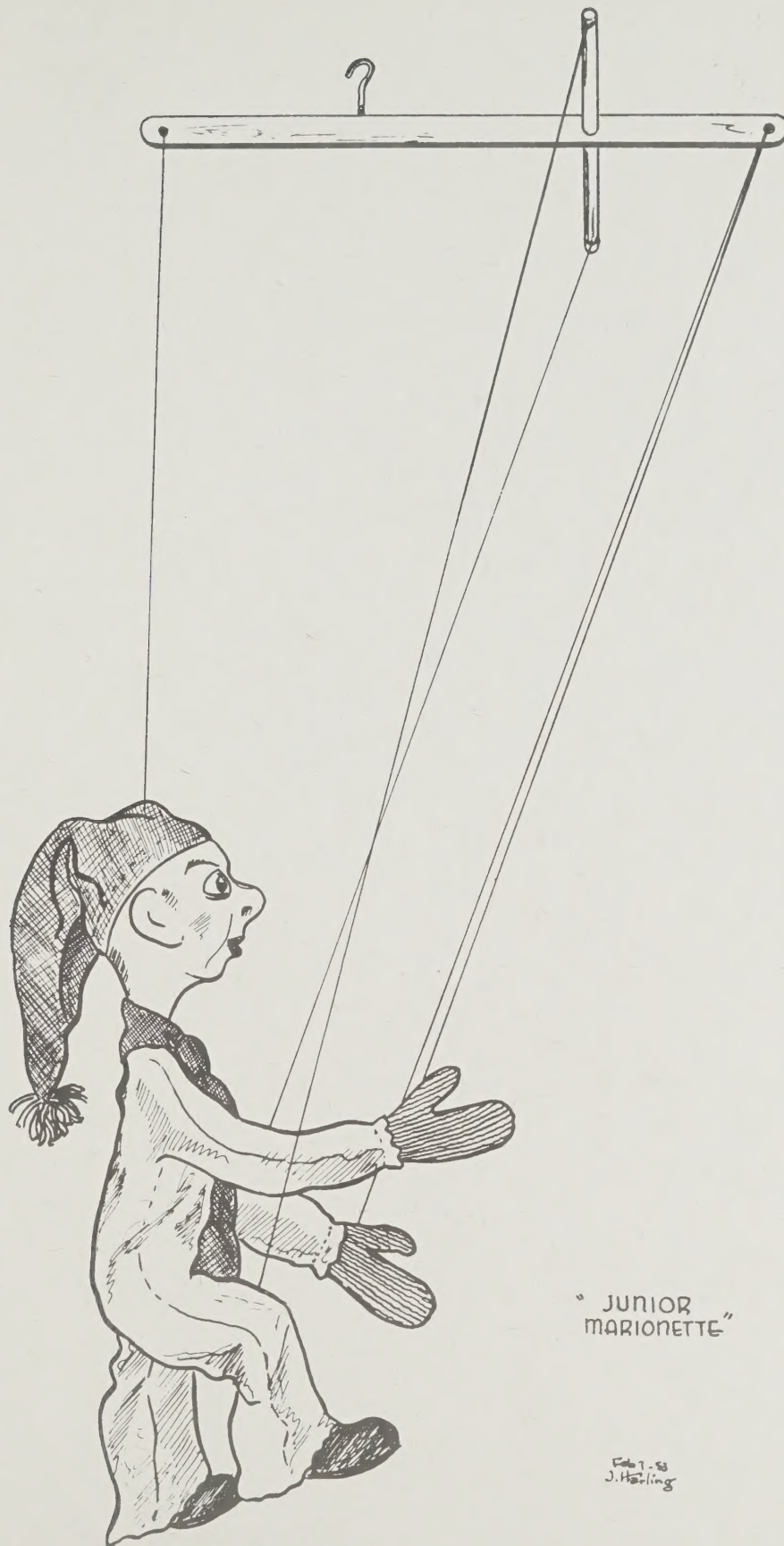
Note that the sleeves of the costume form the puppet's arms when they are fastened to the wrists. When costuming the marionette, remember that the joints must have complete freedom of movement. Don't restrict them by using too heavy a material or fitting costume too tight.

The Hansel and Gretel script given for hand or finger puppets can be easily adapted to suit the junior marionette.

CONTROL (TOP VIEW)
OVERALL HEIGHT WHEN STRUNG APPROX. 28"



"JUNIOR MARIONETTE" SCALE DRAWING



"JUNIOR
MARIONETTE"

Feb 7 - 83
J. Harling

